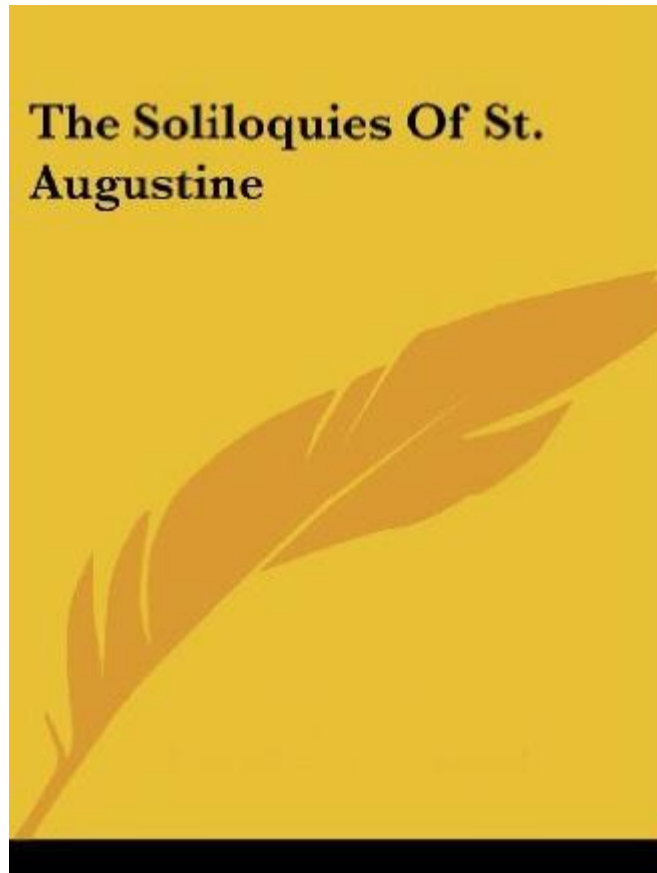


## St. Augustine's Soliloquies



### PREFACE

I then gathered for myself staves, and stud-shafts, and cross-beams, and helves for each of the tools that I could work with; and bow-timbers and bolt-timbers for every work that I could perform—as many as I could carry of the comeliest trees. Nor came I home with a burden, for it pleased me not to bring all the wood home, even if I could bear it. In each tree I saw something that I needed at home; therefore I exhort every one who is able, and has many wains, to direct his steps to the self-same wood where I cut the stud-shafts. Let him there obtain more for himself, and load his wains with fair twigs, so that he may wind many a neat wall, and erect many a rare house, and build a fair enclosure, and therein dwell in joy and comfort both winter and summer, in such manner as I have not yet done. But He who taught me, and to whom the wood was pleasing, hath power to make me dwell more comfortably both in this transitory cottage by the road while I am on this world-pilgrimage, and also in the everlasting home which He hath promised us through

Saint Augustine and Saint Gregory and Saint Jerome, and through many other holy Fathers; as I believe also[1.21—2.23] for the merits of all those He will both make this way more convenient than it hitherto was, and especially will enlighten the eyes of my mind so that I may search out the right way to the eternal home, and to everlasting glory, and to eternal rest, which is promised us through those holy Fathers. So may it be.

It is no wonder that one should labor in timber-work, both in the gathering and also in the building; but every man desireth that, after he hath built a cottage on his lord's lease and by his help, he may sometimes rest himself therein, and go hunting, fowling, and fishing; and use it in every manner according to the lease, both on sea and land, until such time as he shall gain the fee simple of the eternal heritage through his lord's mercy. So may the rich Giver do, who ruleth both these temporary cottages and the homes everlasting. May He, who created both and ruleth both, grant me to be fit for each—both here to be useful and thither to attain.

Augustine, bishop of Carthage, made two books about his own mind. These books are called *Soliloquies*, that is, concerning the meditation and doubts of his mind—how his Reason answered his mind when the mind doubted about anything, or wished to know anything that it could not before clearly understand.

## BOOK I

Then said he, his mind often went fearing and searching out various and rare things, and most of all about himself—*what [1] he was; whether his mind and his soul were mortal and perishable, or ever-living and eternal*; and again, about his God, what He was, and of what nature He was; and what good it were best for him to do, and what evil best to forsake. Then answered me something, I know not what, whether myself or another thing; nor know I whether it was within me or without; *but this one thing I most truly know, that it was my Reason*; and it said to me:

*Reason.* If thou have any good steward that can well hold that which thou gettest and committest unto him, show him to me; *but if thou have none so prudent, search till thou find him; for thou canst not both always keep watch and ward over that which thou hast gained, and also get more.*

*Augustine.* To what shall I commit what more I get, if not to my memory?

*R.* Is thy memory powerful enough to hold all things that thou thinkest out and bidst it to hold?

*A.* Nay, nay; *neither mine nor any man's* is so strong that it can hold everything that is committed to it.

*R.* Then commit it to words and write it down. Howbeit methinks thou art too feeble to write it all; *and though thou wert entirely sound*, thou wouldst need to have a place retired and void of everything else, *and a few wise and skilful men with thee who would hinder thee in no wise, but give aid to thy ability.*

*A.* I have none of these, *neither the leisure, nor the help of other men, nor a place retired enough to suit me for such work*; therefore I know not what I shall do.

*R.* I know then nothing better than that thou shouldst pray. Make known thy wish to God, *Saviour of mind and body*, that thou mayst through such salvation obtain what thou wishest. *And when thou hast prayed*, write the prayer, *lest thou forget it*, that thou be the fitter for thy task. And pray sincerely in few words and with full understanding.

*A.* I will do even as thou teachest me, saying thus:

O Lord, Thou who art the Creator of all things, grant me first to know how to pray to Thee aright and acceptably, and that I may merit to be worthy that Thou *for thy mercy* wilt redeem and deliver me. On Thee I call, O Lord, who madest all that could not else have sprung into being, nor without Thee could even abide. I call to Thee, O Lord, who leavest none of thy creatures to become naught. To Him I call who hath made all creatures beautiful without any original substance. To Thee I call, who never wroughtest any evil, but rather every good work. To Him I call who teacheth to a few wise men that evil is naught.

O Lord, thou hast wrought all things perfect, and nothing imperfect; to Thee is no creature untoward; though any thing will, it can not be so, *for Thou hast shapen them all orderly, and peaceable, and so harmonious that none of them can altogether destroy another, but the ugly ever adorneth the beautiful.* To Thee I call, whom everything loveth that can love, both those which know what they love, and those which know not what they love. Thou who hast shapen all creatures very good, without any evil—Thou who wilt not altogether *show thyself* openly to any but to them that are pure *in heart*, I call to Thee, O Lord, because Thou art the Father of truth and wisdom, of the true and highest life, and of the highest blessedness, and of the highest good, and of the highest brightness, and of the intelligible light; *Thou who art the Father of the Son who hath awakened us, and still arouseth us, from the sleep of our sins,* and warneth us to come to Thee.

To Thee I pray, O Lord, who art the highest truth, and through whom is true all that is true. I pray to Thee, O Lord, who art the true life, and through whom all things live that do live. Thou art the highest blessedness, and through Thee are blessed all that are blessed. Thou art the highest good[2] ... is and beautiful. Thou art the intelligible light through which man knoweth. I pray to Thee, O Lord, who wieldest all the world; whom we can not know bodily, *neither by eyes, nor by smell, nor by ears, nor by taste, nor by touch;* although such laws as we have, and such virtues as we have, we take *all those that are good* from thy realm, *and from thy realm we draw an example of all the good we perform.* For every one falleth who fleeth from Thee, and every one riseth who turneth to Thee, and every one standeth who abideth in Thee; he dieth who wholly forsaketh Thee, he is quickened who turneth to Thee, and he liveth indeed who abideth in Thee. No one that is wise forsaketh Thee, no one seeketh Thee except he be wise, and no one altogether findeth Thee but the pure in heart. That is, he perisheth who forsaketh Thee. *He who loveth Thee seeketh Thee; he who followeth after Thee hath Thee. Thy truths which Thou hast given us awaken us from the sleep of our sins.* Our hope lifteth us to Thee. Our love, which Thou hast given us, bindeth us to Thee. Through Thee we overcome our foes, both *spiritual and carnal.* Thou who forgivest, *draw nigh to me and have mercy upon me,* because Thou hast bestowed upon us great gifts, to wit, that we shall never entirely perish and thus come to naught.

O Lord, who warnest us to watch, *Thou hast given us reason,* wherewith to find out and distinguish good and evil, and to flee the evil. Thou hast given us patience not to despair in any toil nor in any misfortune. Nor is this a wonder, *because Thou dost verily rule well, and makest us to serve Thee well.* Thou hast taught us to understand that *worldly wealth*, which we looked upon as our own, is alien to us, and transitory; and Thou hast also taught us to consider as our own what we looked upon as alien to us, *to[7.21—9.11] wit, the kingdom of heaven, which we once despised.* *Thou who hast taught us to do no unlawful thing, and hast also taught us not to mourn* even though our riches should wane. *Thou who hast taught us to subject our body to our mind.*

Thou who didst overcome death when Thou thyself didst arise, *and also wilt make*

*all men arise. Thou who makest us all worthy of Thee, and cleansest us from all our sins, and justifiest us, and hearest our prayers. Thou who madest us of thy household, and who teachest us all righteousness, and always teachest us the good, and always dost us good, and leavest us not to serve an unrighteous lord, as we did aforetime. Thou callest us back to our way, and leadest us to the door, and openest to us, and givest us the bread of eternal life and the drink of life's well. Thou who threatenest men for their sins, and who teachest them to judge righteous judgments, and to do righteousness. Thou strengthenedst us, and yet dost strengthen us, in our belief, in order that unbelievers may not harm us. Thou hast given us, and yet givest us, understanding, that we may overcome the error of those [who teach that][3] men's souls have, after this world, no reward for their deserts, either of good or of evil, whichever they do here. Thou who hast loosed us from the thralldom of other creatures, Thou always preparest eternal life for us, and always preparest us for eternal life.*

Come now to my aid, Thou who art the only eternal and true Deity—*Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost*—without any variableness or turning, without any need or impotence, and without death. Thou who always dwellest in the highest brightness and in the highest steadfastness, in the highest unanimity and the highest sufficiency; for to Thee there is no want of good, but Thou always dwellest thus full of every good unto eternity. *Thou art Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Thee[9.12—10.23] serve all the creatures that Thou didst create; to Thee is every good soul subject; at thy command the heavens turn and all stars hold their courses; at thy behest the sun bringeth the bright day, and the moon light by night; *after the image of these* Thou dost govern and wield all this world, so that all creatures change even as day and night. Thou rulest and fixest the year by the alternations of the four seasons—to wit, spring, and summer, autumn, and winter; each of which alternateth and varieth with the other, so that each of them is again exactly what and where it formerly was; and so all stars change and vary in the same manner—*likewise the sea and the rivers; in the same manner all creatures suffer change. Howbeit, some vary in another manner, so that the same come not again where they formerly were, nor become just what they were; but others come in their stead, as leaves on trees; and apples, grass, plants, and trees grow old and sere, and others come, wax green, and grow, and ripen; wherefore they again begin to wither. And likewise all beasts and fowls, in such manner that it is now too long to reckon them all. Yea, even men's bodies wax old, just as other creatures do; but just as they formerly lived more worthily than trees or other animals, so shall they arise more worthily on Doomsday, so that never afterward shall their bodies become naught nor wax old; and though the body had decayed, yet the soul was ever-living since first it was created.*

*And all the creatures, about whom we say that they seem to us inharmonious and unsteadfast, have yet somewhat of steadiness, because they are bridled with the bridle of God's commandments.* God gave freedom to men's souls, that they might do either good or evil, whichever they would; and promised good for a reward to them that do good, and evil to them that do evil.

With God is prepared *the well-spring of every good*, and thence is prepared and granted to us every good of those which we have; He shieldeth us against every evil. Nothing is above Him, but all things are under Him, or with Him, or in[11.1—12.17] Him. He created man in His own image, and every man who knoweth himself knoweth that all this is true. To that God I cry, and say:

Hear me, hear me, O Lord, for Thou art my God and my Lord, my Father, and my

*Creator*, and my *Governor*, and my hope, and my riches, and my honor, and my house, and my inheritance, and my salvation, and my life. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, *Thy servant*. Few understand Thee.

Thee alone I love truly above all other things; Thee I seek, *Thee I follow*, Thee I am ready to serve; under Thy rule I wish to dwell, *for Thou alone reignest*. I pray Thee to command me *what Thou wilt*; but heal and open mine eyes that I may see Thy *wonders*, and drive from me folly and *pride*, and give me *wisdom* that I may understand Thee, and teach me whither I should look to behold Thee; then shall I, methinks, do gladly that which Thou commandest me.

I beseech Thee, Thou merciful, *benevolent*, and *beneficent Lord*, to receive me, Thy fugitive; *since once I was formerly Thine, and then fled from Thee to the devil, and fulfilled his will, enduring much misery in his service. But if to Thee it seemeth as it doth to me*, long enough have I felt the pains which I have now suffered, and longer have I served Thy foes than I should those whom Thou hast [under Thy feet].[4] Long enough have I been in the reproach and shame which they brought on me; but do Thou receive me now, Thine own servant, for I am fleeing from them. *Behold, did they not receive me even before I had fled from Thee to them? Never again restore me to them, now that I have sought Thee*, but open to me Thy door, and teach me how to come. I have naught to bring Thee but good will, for I myself have nothing else, nor know I aught better than to love the heavenly and the spiritual above the earthly; and this I do, good Father, since I know naught better than that. *But I know not how I shall now come to Thee except Thou teach me*; teach it, then, to me, and help[12.17—14.5] me. If it is by faith that they find Thee who do find Thee, give me that faith. If by any other power they find Thee who do find Thee, give me that power. If by wisdom they find Thee who find Thee, then give me wisdom. Augment in me the hope of *eternal life*, and increase Thy love in me.

O, how wonderful is Thy goodness, for it is unlike all other good things. I desire to come to Thee; and all that I have need of on the way I desire from Thee, and chiefly that without which I can not come to Thee. If Thou forsake me, I perish; yet I know that Thou wilt not forsake me *unless I forsake Thee; nor will I forsake Thee*, for Thou art the highest good. There is none who rightly seeketh Thee that doth not find Thee. He alone seeketh Thee aright whom Thou teachest aright to seek Thee, and how he should seek Thee. O, good Father, free me entirely from the error in which I have hitherto wandered, and yet wander; and teach me the way in which no foe can encounter me before I come to Thee. If I love naught above Thee, I beseech Thee that I may find Thee; and if I desire any thing beyond measure and wrongly, deliver me from it. Make me worthy to behold Thee.

Thou most ancient and most wise Father, I commit to Thee my body, that Thou mayest keep it whole. Yet I know not what I ask—whether I am asking a thing useful or useless to me or *to the friends whom I love and who love me*; nor do I know how long Thou wilt keep it whole. Therefore I commit and commend it to Thee, *for Thou knowest better than I what I need*. Wherefore I pray Thee alway to teach me, while I am in this body and this world, and help me alway to *utter the counsel which is pleasing to Thee, and which is best and most righteous for me in this life*. But above all other things I earnestly pray Thee to convert me wholly to Thee, and let nothing overcome me on this way, to prevent me from coming to Thee; and cleanse Thou me while I am in this world, and make me humble. Give me loftiness of soul. Make me reasonable and[14.5—15.15] just and prudent and perfect; and, O God, make me a lover of Thy wisdom and a perceiver of it, and make me worthy to dwell in Thy blessed kingdom. Amen!

Now I have done as thou didst teach me; now I have prayed even as thou badest me.  
*Then answered me my Reason and said:*

*R. I see that thou hast prayed;* but say now what thou hast merited, or what thou wouldst have.

*A. I would understand all, and know what I just now said.*

*R. Sum up, then, from all that thou hast just spoken about, that which seemeth to thee that thou most needest and most requirest to know;* then clothe it in few words, and tell it to me.

*A. I will tell it to thee at once:* I would understand God and know mine own soul.

*R. Wouldst thou know any thing more?*

*A. Many things I fain would know that I know not.* Howbeit there is nothing I wish more to know than this.

*R. Then inquire after and seek what thou askest, and tell me first what thou knowest with most certainty, and then say to me: 'Sufficiently known will God and my soul be to me, if they shall be as well known to me as this thing.'*

*A. I can name nothing so well known to me as I would that God were.*

*R. What, then, can we do, if thou knowest not the measure? Thou oughtest to know when it seemed to thee enough, and if thou ever come to that limit, then thou shouldst go no further, but shouldst seek something else, lest thou shouldst desire any thing beyond measure.*

*A. I know what thou wishest; I should illustrate to thee by some example; but I can not, for I know naught like unto God, so that I can say to thee: 'I should like to know God as well as I know this thing.'*

*R. [15.16—17.8] I am astonished at thee,* why thou sayest that thou knowest nothing like unto God, and yet dost not know what He is.

*A. If I knew aught like unto Him, I would love that thing exceedingly. Since I know naught like unto Him, I love nothing but Him and mine own soul; howbeit, I know not what either of them is.*

*R. Thou sayest that thou lovest naught but God and thy soul; if that is true, lovest thou then no other friend?*

*A. Why, if I love a soul, do I not love my friend? Hath not he a soul?*

*R. If thou lovest thy friend because he hath a soul, why, then, lovest thou not every thing that hath a soul? Why dost thou not love mice and fleas?*

*A. I love them not, because they are carnal animals, not men.*

*R. Have not thy friends likewise bodies, even as beasts have?*

*A. Yet it is not on this account I love them, but because they are men, and have reason in their minds—that quality I love even in slaves. Those that I hate, I hate because they turn the good of reason into evil, since I am allowed both to love the good and to hate the evil. Therefore I love all my friends, some less, some more; and him whom I love more than another, I love him so much more than the other as I perceive that he hath a better will than the other, and the desire to make his reason more serviceable.*

*R. Thou understandest it well enough, and rightly enough. But if any one should now say to thee that he could teach thee how thou mightest know God as well as thou knowest Alypius thy servant, would that seem enough to thee, or how much wouldst thou thank him for it?*

*A. I should thank him, but nevertheless I would not answer 'enough.'*

*R. Why?*

A. Alypius is better known to me than God, yet even him I know not so well as I would.

R. [17.9—19.2] Look to it now that thy desire be not beyond measure, now that thou *comparest them together*. *Wouldst thou know God just as thou dost Alypius?*

A. Nay; nor do I make them the more alike, albeit I name them together. But I say that one often knoweth more about higher than about lowlier things. I know now about the *moon, how it will move to-morrow and other nights*; but, I know not what I shall eat to-morrow, which is a baser matter.

R. Then wouldst thou know enough about God, if He should be as well known to thee as the *motion of the moon*—in what constellation it now is, or into which it is going next?

A. Nay; I wish that He were better known to me than the moon which I see with mine eyes. Yet I do not know but that God may, for some secret reasons, which we know not, change it in another wise; then should I be perplexed in what I now imagine I know about it. *But I would have such knowledge about God, in my reason and in my understanding, that nothing could disturb me, nor bring me into any doubt.*

R. Dost thou believe, therefore, that I can make thee *wiser about God than thou now art about the moon?*

A. Yea; I believe it, but I should prefer to know it, for we believe all that we know, and we are ignorant of many things which we believe.

R. Methinks that thou dost not trust the external senses—*eyes, ears, smell, taste, and touch*—as a means of clearly understanding what thou wouldst, unless thou *comprehend it in the mind by the reason*.

A. *That is true*; I trust them not.

R. Wouldst thou know thy servant, whom we were just now speaking of, with the outer senses, or with the inner?

A. I know him now as well as I can know him with the external senses; but I should like to know his mind with my mind; then I should know what *was his loyalty toward me*.

R. [19.3—20.17] Can one know otherwise *than with the mind?*

A. *It doth not seem to me that I can know it* as I would.

R. Dost thou, then, not know thy servant?

A. How can I know him, seeing I am not certain that I know myself? It is said in the law that one shall love his neighbor even as himself. How then do I know in what way I should love him, if I do not know whether I love myself? Nor do I know how he loveth me; yet I know that it is the same with him in regard to me.

R. If thou with the inner sense wouldst know God, why pointest thou me to the outer senses, as if thou wouldst see Him bodily, just as thou formerly saidst thou sawest the moon? I know not therefore how thou teachest it to me, nor can I teach it to any one, by the outer senses. But tell me whether it seemeth enough for thee to know God as Plato and Plotinus knew him?

A. I dare not say that it would seem to me enough, because I know not whether it seemed to them enough in regard to that which they knew. I know not whether it seemed to them that they needed to know more of Him, but even so they formerly seemed to me.[5] When I prayed, methought I did not so fully understand that which I besought as I would. But I still could not forbear to speak about it, just as it seemed to me that I needed, and just as I supposed it was.

R. *Methinks now it seemeth to thee that it is one thing to know, and quite another*

only to suppose.

A. Yea, so methinks; therefore I would now that thou tell me what difference there is between these, or what one certainly knoweth.

R. Knowest thou that thou didst learn the science which we call geometry? In that science thou learnedst on a ball, or an apple, or a painted egg, that thou mightest by the painting understand the motion of the heavens and the course of the stars. Knowest thou that thou didst learn in the same science about a line drawn along the middle of the[20.17—22.10] ball? Knowest thou what was there taught thee about the positions of the twelve stars and the path of the sun?

A. Yea; I know well enough what the line signifieth.

R. Now that thou sayest thou doubtest this no whit, dost thou not fear the Academicians, those philosophers who said that there was never anything certain beyond a doubt?

A. Nay; I do not fear them much, for they said that there never was a wise man. Therefore I am not at all ashamed not to be wise, for I know that as yet I am not wise; but if I ever become as wise as they, then I will do as they teach, until I can say that I know without doubt what I seem to myself to know.

R. I do not object at all to thy doing so. But thou sayest thou knowest about the line which was painted on the ball on which thou learnedst the revolution of this heaven; I would know whether thou also knowest about the ball on which the line is drawn.

A. Yea; I know both. No man can mistake that.

R. Didst thou learn with the eyes or with the mind?

A. With both: first with the eyes, then with the mind. The eyes brought me to the understanding; but after I had perceived it, I left off looking with the eyes, and reflected, for it seemed to me that I could contemplate much more of it than I could see, after the eyes had fixed it in my mind. Just so a ship bringeth one over the sea; when he cometh ashore, he letteth the ship stand, for it seemeth to him that he can travel more easily without it than with it. However, it seemeth easier to me to travel by skiff on dry land than to learn any science with the eyes, but without the reason—though the eyes must at times give aid.

R. Therefore thou must needs look rightly with the eyes of the mind to God, just as the ship's anchor-cable is stretched direct from the ship to the anchor, and fasten the eyes of thy mind on God, just as the anchor is fastened in the earth. Though the ship be out among the sea-billows, it will remain sound and unbroken if the cable holdeth, since one end of it is fast to the earth and the other to the ship.

A. [22.11—24.7] What is that which thou callest the mind's eyes?

R. Reason, in addition to other virtues.

A. What are the other virtues?

R. Wisdom, and humility, and honor, and moderation, and righteousness, and mercy, and prudence, and constancy, and benevolence, and chastity, and abstinence. With these anchors thou art able to fasten to God the cable that shall hold the ship of thy mind.

A. May the Lord God make me entirely as thou teachest me [to be]. I would if I could, but I can not understand how I shall be able to obtain these anchors, or how I shall fasten them, except thou teach it to me more clearly.

R. I could teach thee, but I ought first to ask thee how many of this world's lusts thou hast renounced for God. After thou hast told me that, then I can say to thee without any doubt that thou hast obtained so many of the anchors as thou hast renounced the lusts of the world.



A. *How can I forsake that which I know and am familiar with, and have been used to from childhood, and love that which is unknown to me except by hearsay? Howbeit, I feel sure that if I knew what thou sayest about me as certainly as what I here see for myself, I would love that, and despise this.*

R. *I wonder why thou speakest so. Suppose now if a letter with seal from thy lord should come to thee, canst thou say thou art not able to understand him by that, nor to recognise his will therein? If thou sayest that thou canst know his will therein, say then whether it seemeth to thee better to follow his will, or to follow after the wealth which he gave thee over and above his friendship.*

A. *Whether I will or not, I must speak truly, unless I am prepared to lie. If I lie, God knoweth it. Therefore I dare speak only the truth, so far as I can know it. Methinks it is better to forsake the gift, and follow the giver, who is to me the steward both of the riches and of his friendship, unless I can have both. I should like, however, to[24.7—25.23] have both, if I could follow both the wealth and also his will.*

R. *Full rightly hast thou answered me, but I would ask thee whether thou supposest that thou canst have all that thou now hast without thy lord's friendship.*

A. *I do not suppose that any man is so foolish as to think that.*

R. *Thou understandest it rightly enough, but I would know whether thou thinkest that what thou hast is temporal or eternal.*

A. *I never supposed it to be eternal.*

R. *What thinkest thou about God and the anchors which we spake of—are they like these, or are they eternal?*

A. *Who is so mad as to dare say that God is not eternal?*

R. *If He is eternal, why lovest thou not the eternal Lord more than the temporal? Lo, thou knowest that the Eternal will not leave thee, except thou go from Him; and thou must needs depart from the other whether thou will or no; thou must either leave him, or he thee. Howbeit I perceive that thou lovest him very much, and also fearest and dost well; very rightly and very becomingly thou dost. But I wonder why thou dost not love the Other much more, Him who giveth thee both the friendship of the worldly lord and His own, and, after this world, life eternal. The Lord is the ruler of you both—thine and thy lord's whom thou so immeasurably lovest.*

A. *I confess to thee that I would love Him above all other things, if I could understand and know Him as I would. But I can understand very little of Him, or nothing at all, and yet at times, when I think carefully of Him, and any inspiration cometh to me about the eternal life, then I by no means prefer this present life to that, nor even love it so much.*

R. *Wishest thou now to see Him and clearly understand Him?*

A. *I have no wish above that.*

R. *Keep, then, His commandments.*

A. [25.24—27.13] *What commandments?*

R. *I named them to thee before.*

A. *Methinks they are very burdensome and very manifold.*

R. *What one loveth, methinks, is not burdensome.*

A. *Nor doth any work seem burdensome to me if I can see and have what I work for. But doubt begetteth heaviness.*

R. *Thou graspest it well enough in speech, and well enough thou understandest it. But I can say to thee that I am the faculty of Reason, which argueth with thee—the discursive faculty whose province it is to explain to thee in such wise that thou mayest see*

God with thy mind's eyes as clearly as thou now seest the sun with the eyes of the body.

A. *Almighty God reward thee! I am truly grateful for thy promise to teach it to me so clearly. Although I was ignorant, yet I emerge from this condition to a clearer vision of Him, if I come to see Him as I now see the sun. Howbeit I do not see the sun so clearly as I would like to. I know very little better what the sun is, though I look on it every day. Still it seemed good to me that I might thus clearly see God.*

R. *Now consider very earnestly what I formerly said to thee.*

A. *I will, so much as possible.*

R. First know of a truth that the mind is the eye of the soul; secondly, thou must know that it is needful for one to see what one looketh at; the fourth is what one would see. For every one having eyes first looketh at that which he would see till he hath beheld it. When he hath beheld it then he truly seeth it. But thou must know that I who now speak with thee am Reason, and I am to every human mind what looking is to the eyes. Three things it behooveth the eyes of every human body to have; the fourth is what it seeketh and would draw to them. One is that thou[27.13—29.13] hast and usest and lovest that which thou formerly didst hope for.

A. *Alas! Shall I ever come to that which I hope for, or shall that ever come to me which I desire?*

R. Add now love as a third besides faith and hope; for the eyes of no soul are entirely sound—especially to see God with—if lacking these three. Seeing, then, is knowing.

A. If then there be sound eyes, that is, perfect understanding, what is then wanting to it, or what is more needful?

R. The soul's vision is *Reason and Contemplation*. But many souls look with these, and yet see not what they desire, because they have not entirely sound eyes. But he who wisheth to see God must have the eyes of his mind whole; that is, he must have an abiding faith and a just hope and a full love. When he hath all these, then hath he life blessed and eternal. The vision which we shall catch of God is knowledge. That knowledge is between two things—between that which understandeth and that which is understood—and is fastened on both *even as love is between the lover and the one loved. On both it is fastened, as we said before concerning the anchor-cable that the one end was fast to the ship, and the other to the land.*

A. *Then if it ever again happeneth that I can see God as thou now teachest me that I should behold Him, would I need all three of the things that thou formerly spakest about, namely: faith and hope and love?*

R. What need then is there of faith, when one seeth that which he formerly exercised faith toward, and again knoweth that which he formerly hoped for? But love never waneth—it abideth greatly increased when the understanding is fixed on God; nor hath love ever any end. *Omni consummatione uidi finem; latum mandatum tuum nimis:[6] that is, of everything in the world I shall see the end, but the end of thy commandments I shall never see.* That is the love about which he prophesied. But, although the soul be perfect and pure while it is in the body, it can not see God as[29.13—30.27] it desireth, because of the sorrow and tribulation of the body, except with much labor through faith and hope and love. *These are the three anchors which sustain the ship of the mind in the midst of the dashing of the waves. Yet the mind hath much comfort because it believeth and clearly knoweth that the misfortunes and unhappiness of this world are not eternal. So the ship's master,[7] when the ship rideth most unsteadily at anchor and the sea is roughest, then*

*knoweth of a truth that calm weather is coming. Three things are needful to the eyes of each soul: One is that they be whole; the second, that they should look at what they would see; the third, that they may see what they look at. For the three is God's help necessary, for one can neither do good nor any thing without His aid. Therefore He is always to be entreated that He be ever helpful; therefore also He inspireth us and inciteth us first to be well-wishing, and afterwards worketh with us that which He willeth till such time as we perfect it with Him; and especially He worketh with us as with some powerful tool, just as it is written[8] that with each well-working person God is a co-worker. We know that no man can perform any good unless God work with him; howbeit no man must be so idle as not to begin something through the strength that God giveth him.*

*A. Thou teachest me the right way. Now I know what I ought to do; but I do not know whether I can or can not.*

*R. Thou oughtest not to despair because thou canst not come at once to that which thou desirest for thyself. Can he who would learn a science ever do so in a short time, a little more or a little less? Thine is the science of all sciences, to wit, that one should seek after God and look toward Him and see Him.*

*A. Well thou advisest me; but I recall what thou didst formerly promise me, and very joyfully I abide that promise; thou[30.27—32.7] didst promise to teach me how to see God with the eyes of my mind as clearly as I now see the sun with the eyes of my body.*

*R. Well thou remindest me; I will do for thee what I promised. Call to mind now that thou canst see with thy body's eyes three things in regard to the sun: One is that it existeth; another, that it shineth; the third, that it lighteth up many things with its shining. All the things which are bright, when the sun shineth on them, shine against it, each after its own kind. But those things which are not bright shine not against the sun, although it shineth on them. But the sun shineth, nevertheless, on them, and yet he who looketh toward it can not see it wholly just as it is. All this and more thou canst observe concerning God. He is the high Sun. He always abideth, lighting up with His own light both the sun which we see with bodily eyes and all creatures both spiritual and terrestrial. Therefore he seemeth to me a very foolish man who wisheth to understand Him just as He is, while we are yet in this world. Behold! I suppose that no one is so foolish that he becometh sorrowful because he can not see and understand, just as it is, the sun which we look at with corporeal eyes; but every one rejoiceth that at least he can understand according to the measure of his understanding. He doth well who desireth to understand the Eternal and Almighty Sun; but he doth very foolishly, if he wisheth to know Him perfectly while he is in this world.*

*A. Very wonderfully and very truly thou teachest, and very much thou hast comforted me and brought me into good hope. But I pray still for what thou aforetime didst promise me.*

*R. Two things I promised that I would accomplish and teach thee, to wit, to understand God and thyself. But I would know how thou desirest to understand that—whether thou wouldst believe without experience, or know by experience.*

*A. [32.8—33.19]I would know it by experience, for I know nothing of it surely.*

*R. That is no wonder. I did not explain it to thee in such wise that thou couldst know it by experience; for there is yet something which thou must first know, to wit, whether we both are whole.*

*A. Thou must know whether thou findest any health, either in me, or in thyself, or in us both. It becometh thee to teach and me to listen; and it becometh me to answer what I understand according to the measure of my understanding, if so be I understand it at all; if*

*I do not understand it at all, then must I admit it and leave it to thy judgment.*

R. Wishest thou to know more than about God and thyself?

A. I answer thee that I do not *wish anything* more earnestly; but I dare not promise thee that I shall not desire any thing else than that; for it is verily hidden from me, albeit something cometh into my mind which, methinks, nothing can hinder me from furthering and performing. When another thing cometh which seemeth to me more right and reasonable, then I leave off that which I formerly held enough; and therefore at times it happeneth that something is so fixed in my mind, that I think I shall never let it go so long as I live. Howbeit there cometh to me then some trouble which occupieth me so that I can never leave it, nor can I perform it although I can not think of any better [thing to be done].[9] But three things have troubled me most: One is, I fear that I must part with my friends whom I love most, *or they with me—either for life or for death*; the second is, I fear sickness, *both the known and the unknown*; the third is, I fear death.

R. *I hear now what thou lovest most next to thine own reason and God: They are, the life of thy friends, and thine own health, and thine own life. Of these five things thou art afraid that thou shalt lose some, because thou lovest them[33.19—35.8] all very much. If thou didst not love them, then thou hadst not dreaded that thou wouldst lose them.*

A. I admit what thou sayest to me.

R. Therefore methinks that I see thee very sad and greatly cast down in thy mind, because thou hast not such health as thou hadst; nor hast thou all thy friends with thee *so agreeable and harmonious as thou wouldst. Nor doth it seem to me any wonder that thou art sad for that reason.*

A. Thou understandest it rightly; I can not gainsay that.

R. If then it ever happen that thou shalt find thyself full whole and full strong, and hast all thy friends with thee, both in mind and in body, *and in that same work and in that same will which pleaseth thee best to do*, wilt thou then be happy at all?

A. Yea, verily; if it should now suddenly happen, I do not know *how on earth* I would begin.

R. Hast thou not then still some trouble, such as immoderate sorrow, either of mind or of body—seeing now thou hast those two things? Wert thou, therefore, foolish in heart, when thou didst wish that thou shouldst see with such eyes the high and everlasting Sun?

A. Now thou hast overcome me withal, so that I by no means know how much of health I have, nor how much of sickness.

R. That is no wonder. No man hath such sound eyes that he can look any length of time toward the sun which we here see, much less if he have weak eyes. But those that have weak eyes can be more at ease in the darkness than in the light. Methinks, though, that it seemeth to thee that thou hast sound eyes. *Thou thinkest of the health of thy soul's eyes, but thou dost not think of the great light which thou wishest to see. Be not wroth with me, albeit I question thee and examine thee, for I needs must do that. Methinks thou dost not understand thyself.*

A. [35.9—37.3] *I am in no wise wroth with thee, but rejoice in what thou sayest, because I know that thou seekest my good.*

R. Wishest thou any wealth?

A. Long ago I resolved that I should despise it. I am now three and thirty years old, and I was one less than twenty when I first resolved that I would not love wealth overmuch. Though enough should come to me, I would not rejoice very much, *nor enjoy it too immoderately, nor would I gain more to keep than I could fitly make use of, and keep and*

*support the men on, whom I must help; and the residue I think as orderly to divide as I best am able so to do.*

R. Wishest thou any honor?

A. I confess to thee that I did wish that till recently desire failed.

R. Desirest thou not a beautiful wife, and withal modest and well instructed and of good manners and subject to thy will, and one who hath much substance and would not engross thee in any thing, nor hinder thee from enjoying leisure at thy will?

A. Dost thou not praise her overmuch that I may wish her all the more? For methinks there is nothing worse for him *that willeth to serve God than to take a wife—though some one hath said* that it is better to take one for the rearing of children. Howbeit I say that *it is better for priests not to have a wife. Therefore I decided that I would take none, because I wished to be the freer to serve God.*

R. I hear now that thou dost not think to take a wife; but I would know whether thou still hast any love or lust *after any uncleanness.*

A. *Why askest thou more about that?* I do not now desire that; but if lust ever cometh to me, I dread it *as an adder.* Ever the less is my desire for it, and ever the more I wish to see the light, even as I lust the less after this manner.

R. How about food? How much dost thou desire that?

A. [37.4—39.13] I desire none of those meats which I have renounced; I desire those which I have thought right to eat, when I see them. What shall I say more either about meat, or drink, or baths, *or riches, or honor, or any worldly lusts?* Nor do I wish any more of these than I shall need to have for my bodily comfort and to keep my strength. *Howbeit I need much more for the wants of those men which I must take care of, and moreover this I needs must have.*

R. Thou art right. But I would know whether thy old *covetousness and greediness be entirely extirpated and uprooted from thy mind, so that it can not still grow.*

A. *Why askest thou that?*

R. I speak of the things which thou before saidst to me that thou hadst decided to leave off and for nothing would turn back to again, namely: overmuch wealth, and *immoderate honor, and inordinately rich and luxurious living;* and therefore I now ask whether, either for the love of them or for the love of any thing, thou wilt return to them again. I heard formerly that thou saidst that thou lovedst thy friends, next to God and thine own reason, above other things. Now I would know whether thou, for their love, wouldst lay hold of these things again.

A. I will lay hold of all again for their love, if I can not else have their companionship—*yet it doth not please me so to do.*

R. Very reasonably thou dost answer me and very rightly. *Howbeit I understand that the lusts of the world are not entirely uprooted from thy mind, although the trench be prepared; for the roots can sprout thence again.* Yet I impute that not to thee as a fault, for thou layest hold of it not for the love of those things but for the love of this thing which it is more right to love than that. *I never ask about any man, what he doth; but yet I ask thee now why thou lovest thy friends so much, or what thou lovest in them, or whether thou lovest them for their own sake or for some other thing.*

A. [39.14—41.19] I love them for friendship and for companionship, *and above all others I love those who most help me to understand and to know reason and wisdom, most of all about God and about our souls; for I know that I can more easily seek after Him with their help than I can without.*

R. How then if they do not wish to inquire *after the One whom thou seekest*?

A. I shall teach them so that they will.

R. But how then if thou canst not, and if they be so foolish as to love other things more than that which thou lovest, and say that they can not or will not?

A. *I, nevertheless, will have them*: they will be helpful to me in some things and I likewise to them.

R. But how then if they disturb thee, *and if the infirmities of the body hinder thee*?

A. That is true; *howbeit I would not fear at all the infirmities, if it were not for three things: One of these is heavy sorrow; another is death; the third is that I can not seek nor truly find what I desire just as thou madest me know*. Toothache hindered me from all learning, but yet it did not altogether snatch from me the remembrance of that which I formerly learned. Howbeit I suppose, if I should understand certainly that which I yearn to understand, sorrow would seem to me very little, or else naught, compared with faith. Yet I know many a pain is much sharper than toothache, albeit I never suffered any sharper. I learned that Cornelius Celsus taught *in his books* that in every man wisdom is the highest good and sickness the greatest evil. The saying appeareth to me very true. Concerning the same thing the same Cornelius saith: 'Of two things we are what we are, to wit, of soul and of body. *The soul is spiritual, and the body earthy*. The best faculty of the soul is wisdom, and the worst affliction of the body is sickness.' Methinks moreover that this is not false.

R. Have we not now shown clearly enough that wisdom is the highest good? Is it not also beyond a doubt that it is to every man the best of all the virtues? And is it not his[41.19—43.12] best work to search after wisdom, and love it whenever he findeth it? But I would that we two might now search out who the lovers of this wisdom should be. *Dost thou not know that every man who loveth another very much liketh better to caress and kiss the other on the bare body than where the clothes come between? Now I understand that thou lovest wisdom very much, and wishest so much to know and feel it naked that thou wouldst not that any cloth were between; but it will seldom so openly reveal itself to any man. At those times when it will show any limb thus bare, it doth so to very few men; but I know not how thou canst receive it with gloved hands. Thou must also place the bare body against it, if thou wilt feel it*. But tell me now, if thou lovedst a certain beautiful woman very immoderately and above all other things, and if she *fled from thee* and would reciprocate thy love on no other condition than that thou wouldst renounce every other love for hers alone, *wouldst thou then do as she wished?*

A. Alas! what a hard thing thou dost enjoin upon me! *Didst thou not formerly admit that I loved nothing above wisdom, and moreover I too admitted it, albeit thou saidst then that* whoever loveth one thing for the sake of another, he doth not of a truth love that former thing for which he professeth love, *but really that for which he loved the former thing and thought to obtain it*. Therefore I assert that I love wisdom for no other thing than for its own sake. I love all the world—each thing as I consider it profitable, and especially that thing most which helpeth me to wisdom; and moreover those things which I fear most to lose. Howbeit I do not love any thing else in such wise as I love wisdom. Every thing which I love most I grant, while I love it most, to no man but to myself, *except wisdom alone*. It I love above all other things, and yet of my free will I would grant it to every man, so that all who are on this earth might love it and search after it, yea, find it, and then use it; for I know that each of us would love the other by so much more as our will and our love were more in unison.

R. [43.13—44.24] *Said I not formerly that he who would feel the bare body must*

*feel it with bare hands? And I say also, if thou wilt behold wisdom itself thus bare, that thou must not allow any cloth between thine eyes and it, nor even any mist; albeit to that thou canst not come in this present life, though I enjoin it upon thee, and though thou wish it. Wherefore no man ought to despair, though he have not so sound eyes as he who can look the sharpest; even he who can look the sharpest of all can not himself see the sun just as it is while he is in this present life. Yet no man hath such weak eyes that he can not live by the sun and use it, if he can see at all, unless he be purblind. Moreover, I can teach unto thee other parables about wisdom. Consider now whether any man seeketh there the king's home where he is in town, or his court, or his army, or whether it seemeth to thee that they all must come thither by the same road; on the contrary, I suppose they would come by very many roads: some would come from afar, and would have a road very long and very bad and very difficult; some would have a very long and very direct and very good road; some would have a very short and yet hard and strait and foul one; some would have a short and smooth and good one; and yet they all would come to one and the same lord, some more easily, some with more difficulty; neither do they come thither with like ease, nor are they there alike at ease. Some are in more honor and in more ease than others; some in less, some almost without, except the one that he loveth. So is it likewise with wisdom. Each one who wisheth it and who anxiously prayeth for it, he can come to it and abide in its household and live near it; yet some are nearer it, others farther from it; just so is every king's court: some dwell in cottages, some in halls, some on the threshing-floor, some in prison; and yet they all live by the favor of one lord, just as all men live under one sun, and by its light see what they see. Some look very carefully and very clearly; some see with great difficulty; others are stark blind, yet use the sun. But just as the visible sun lighteth the eyes of our body,[44.25—46.10] so wisdom lighteth the eyes of our mind, which is our understanding. And just as the eyes of the body are more sound, thus to use more of the sun's light, so is it also with the mind's eyes, that is, the understanding: just by so much as that is sounder, by so much more may it see the eternal sun, which is wisdom. Every man that hath sound eyes needeth no other guide nor teacher to see the sun, except health. If he hath sound eyes, he may himself look at the sun. On the contrary, if he hath unsound eyes, then he needeth that one teach him to look first on the wall, then on gold, and on silver; when he can more easily look on that, [then let him look][10] on fire, before he looketh at the sun. Then after he hath learned that his eyes do not at all avoid the fire, let him look on the stars and on the moon, then on sunshine, before he looketh on the sun itself. And just so with the other sun that we formerly spake of, that is, wisdom. He who wisheth to see it with his mind's eyes must begin very gradually, and then little by little mount nearer and nearer by steps, just as if he were climbing on a ladder and wished to ascend some sea-cliff. If he then ever cometh up on the cliff, he may look both over the shore and over the sea, which then lieth beneath him, and also over the land that formerly was above him. But if it seemeth good to us, let us stop here for this day, and to-morrow seek further after the same thing which we before sought after.*

*A. Nay, not at all; but I humbly pray thee that thou weary not, nor leave off the conversation here; but say somewhat more clearly about it so that I may more clearly feel and understand something concerning this wisdom, and bid me what thou wilt. I will understand it, if it lies in my power.*

*R. I know not anything to command thee of which thou hast more need for the science which thou wishest to know, than that thou despise, so much as thou art able, worldly honors, and especially intemperate and unlawful ones, because I fear that they may*

bind thy mind to themselves and take[46.10—48.6] it with their snare, just as one catcheth wild beasts or fowls, so that thou canst not accomplish what thou wishest; for I know that the freer thou art from the things of this world, the more clearly thou shalt understand about the wisdom which thou desirest; and if it ever happen that thou canst so entirely forsake them that thou desirest naught of them, then shall I be able to say to thee forsooth (believe me if thou wilt), that in that very hour thou shalt know all that thou wishest now to know, and shalt have all that thou wishest to have.

A. When shall that be? I do not believe that it will ever be that I shall not yearn at all after this world's honors, unless one thing happen, namely: that I see *those honors which thou promisest me. Howbeit I know not that it would please me so well to yearn no more after this world's honors.*

R. Now methinks thou dost not answer me with reason. Methinks that thou speakest very much as if thine eyes should say to thy mind: 'We will never avoid the darkness of the night until we can see the sun itself.' Thus, methinks, the eyes do, if they avoid that part of the sun's light which they can see. It can not happen even to the soundest of all eyes that they can look from this world and see the sun as it is. By this thou mayest conclude that thou oughtest not to sigh though thou canst not see wisdom naked with the eyes of thy mind just as it is; for thou canst never do that *while thou art in the darkness of thy sins. But enjoy the wisdom which thou hast, and have joy in the part which thou canst understand, and seek more with thy whole heart. Wisdom itself knoweth what thou art worthy of, and how much it may show itself to thee. There is naught worse in a man than to suppose that he is worthy of what he is not. The physician knoweth better than the sick whether he can be healed or not, or whether he can be healed by mild or by severe treatment. Therefore thou must not excuse thyself too much, nor sigh too much after aught. The eyes of thy mind are not so wholly sound as thou dost suppose.*

A. [48.7—49.18] Cease, O cease! Do not vex me, nor increase my sorrow. Enough have I, though thou increase it not. *Thou seekest it at times so high, at times so deep, that I understand now that I am not such as I supposed, but I am ashamed that I supposed that which was not. Truly enough thou hast said. The Physician whom I wish to heal me knoweth how sound my eyes are. He knoweth what He wisheth to show me. To Him I commit myself, and to His goodness I entrust myself. May He do unto me according to His will! On Him I call, that He may make fast my soul to Him. I will never again say that I have sound eyes until I see wisdom itself.*

R. I know no better advice for thee than thou formerly saidst. But leave off woe and sorrow, *and be measurably happy.* Thou wert formerly too immoderately sorrowful, *for sorrow injureth both mind and body.*

A. Thou wouldst restrain my weeping and my sorrow, and still I perceive no limit to my misery and misfortunes. Thou bidst me leave off sorrow lest I, *either in mind or in body, be weaker; yet I find no strength, either in mind or body, but am full nigh in despair.* But I beseech thee, if thou in any wise canst, to lead me by some shorter way, somewhat nearer the light *of the understanding* which I long ago desired and yet could not come by in my ignorance; notwithstanding that I may afterwards be ashamed to look again toward the darkness which I formerly desired to forsake, if ever I draw nigh to the light.

R. Let us now end this book here properly, and name a shorter way in another book, if we can.

A. Nay, nay; let us not leave this book yet until I am able to understand that which we are after.



R. Methinks I ought to do as thou bidst me. Something draweth me on, I know not what, *but I surmise it is the God thou seekest after.*

A. *Thanks be to Him that adviseth thee, and to thee also, if thou praise Him. Lead whither thou wilt: I will follow after thee if I can.*

R. [49.19—52.2] Methinks thou desirest still to know that same thing about God and thy soul which thou didst formerly desire.

A. Yea, that alone I desire.

R. Wishest thou aught more? Wishest thou not to know truth?

A. How can I, without truth, know aught of truth, *or what wilt thou say, without truth, that God is? For we hear it read in the Gospel that Christ said that He is the way, the truth, and the life.*

R. Rightly thou sayest; but I would know whether it seemeth to thee that the true and truth are one [and the same thing].

A. Two things, methinks, they are, *just as wisdom is one thing, and that which is wise is another*; and likewise chastity is one thing, and that which is chaste is another.

R. Which, then, doth seem to thee better, the true or truth?

A. Truth; for all that is true is so because of truth; and every thing that is chaste is so because of chastity; *and he who is wise is so because of wisdom.*

R. *Thanks be to God that thou understandest it so well. Howbeit I would know whether thou suppose, if a wise man were dead, wisdom would be dead. Or again, if a chaste man were dead, chastity would be dead. Or if a truthful man were dead, would truth then be dead.*

A. Nay, nay, verily; that can not come to pass.

R. *Well dost thou understand it. But I would know whether thou suppose that wisdom is gone, or chastity, or truth, when the man passeth away; or whence they formerly came, or where they are, if they exist? Or whether they be corporeal, or spiritual? For no man doubteth that every thing that is existeth somewhere.*

A. *Very searching is thy question, and pleasant for him to know who can know it. What is wanting to him who knoweth that?*

R. *Canst thou recognize the righteous and the unrighteous?*

A. [52.3—53.19] *Yea, to some extent; not, however, as I would. But I would like to know what thou formerly didst ask.*

R. *I wonder why thou hast so completely forgotten what thou only a little before didst admit that thou knewest. Didst thou not say before that thou knewest truth to be eternal, although the true man passed away? And now thou sayest, 'If it existeth.'*

A. That same thing I say still. I know that it abideth, although the true man passeth away.

R. All that is true abideth while it doth exist; *but that which thou callest truth is God. He ever was, and ever will be, immortal and eternal. God hath all knowledge in Himself sound and perfect. He hath made two eternal things, to wit, angels and men's souls, to which He gave some portion of eternal gifts, such as wisdom and righteousness, and many others which it seemeth to us too numerous to count. To angels He giveth according to their capacity, and to the souls of men He giveth gifts according to the capacity of each. These same they need never lose, for they are everlasting, and to men He giveth many and divers good gifts in this world, although they be not eternal. Howbeit they are serviceable while we are in this world. Dost thou yet understand that souls are immortal? If thou hast understood it, do not conceal it from me, but confess it. If it is otherwise, tell me then.*



A. *Thanks be to God* for the part I know. I will now consider this and hold it as I best can, and if I have doubts about any thing, I will promptly tell them to thee.

R. Believe firmly in God, and commit thyself wholly to God, and seek not too much the fulfilling of thine own will above His; but be His servant, not thine own; and confess that thou art His servant. Then He will raise thee ever nearer and nearer to himself, and will not let any adversity befall thee. Howbeit if He permit any adversity to befall thee, it will be for thy good, although thou canst not understand it.

A. [53.20—54.6] That I both hear and believe, *and this instruction I will follow as I best can*, and will pray God that I may fulfil it *as thou long ago didst instruct me; do thou now teach me, if thou wilt*.

R. Do this for me first, and *tell me again, after thou hast studied this, what thou likest of this; and if thou doubttest aught about any of these things, then tell it to me*.

*Here endeth the anthology of the first book.*

## BOOK II

*Here beginneth the anthology of the second book.*

A. Alas! Long have we been unoccupied, yet we have not sought after *what thou didst promise me*.

R. *Let us make amends for it*; let us carry it forward into another book.

A. Yea, let us indeed.

R. Let us believe that God is our Helper.

A. Truly would I that we believed it, if I had power. *But methinks faith is not in our power, in such measure as we seek, unless God give it to us*.

R. *Both faith and all the good that we shall have. Therefore I know not what else we can do without His help. Howbeit I advise thee that thou begin it. Pray in as few words as thou most sincerely canst, and ask for that which is and may be most needful for thee*.

A. *Then said I: 'Lord, Lord, Thou who remainest unchangeable, grant me these two things which I always wished, to wit, that I may understand Thee and myself.' Now I have done as thou didst instruct me; truly have I prayed*.

R. *Now I hear what thou wishest to know. Howbeit I would first learn from thee whether thou knowest without doubt that thou dost exist or not; or that thou dost live or dost not live*.

A. *These are two things which I certainly know*.

R. What now wishest thou to know?

A. Whether I be immortal.

R. I hear that thou wouldst live always.

A. That I confess.

R. Wilt thou, then, know enough if I cause thee to know that thou mayest live always?

A. That is a very good desire; yet say what I ask thee about: *whether I shall live always; and then I would know[56.13—58.22] whether I, after the parting of the body and the soul, shall ever know more than I now know of all that which I have long wished to know; for I can not find any thing better in man than that he know, and nothing worse than that he be ignorant*.

R. Now I know all that thou wishest: One thing is, thou wouldst exist; another, thou wouldst live; the third, thou wouldst know. And I know also why thou wishest these three things: Thou wouldst exist in order to live, and thou wouldst live in order to know. And these three things I hear that thou certainly knowest: Thou knowest that thou art, and thou knowest that thou livest, and thou also knowest that thou knowest something, albeit thou knowest not all that thou wouldst know.

A. That is true. *These three things I know, and these three things I desire. I would exist in order that I may live. What would I care whether I existed, if I lived not? Or what would I care for life, if I knew nothing?*

R. Now I hear that thou lovest all that thou dost love on account of these three things, and I know also which of the three things thou lovest most. Thou lovest to exist because thou wouldst live, and thou wouldst live in order to know. Thus I perceive that thou lovest wisdom above all other things. That, methinks, is the highest good, and also thy God.

A. Truth thou sayest to me. What is the highest wisdom other than the highest good? Or what is the highest good except that every man in this world love God as much as he loveth wisdom—whether he love it much, or little, or moderately? So much as he loveth wisdom, so much doth he love God.

R. Very rightly thou hast understood it. But I would we began again where we were before. Now thou knowest that thou art, and that thou livest, and that thou knowest something, albeit not so much as thou wouldst; and a fourth thing thou wouldst also know, to wit, whether the three things all be eternal or not, or whether any of them be eternal;[58.22—59.27] or, if they are all eternal, whether any of them after this world in the eternal life shall either become worse or wane.

A. All my yearning hast thou understood very well.

R. About what doubtest thou now? Didst thou not before confess that God is eternal and almighty, and hath created two rational and eternal creatures, as we before said, namely: angels and men's souls, to which He hath given eternal gifts? These gifts they need never lose. If thou now rememberest this and believest this, then knowest thou beyond doubt that thou art, and always wilt be, and always wilt love, and always wilt know something, albeit thou mayest not know all that thou wouldst. Now thou knowest about those three things that thou askedst about, namely: (1) Whether thou art immortal; (2) Whether thou shalt know something throughout eternity; (3) Whether thou, after the parting of the body and the soul, shalt know more than thou now knowest, or less. After the fourth we shall still seek—now that thou knowest the three—until thou also know that.

A. Very orderly thou dost explain it, but I will yet say to thee what I firmly believe, and about what I yet doubt. I do not doubt at all about God's immortality and about His omnipotence, for it can not be else respecting the trinity and the unity, which was without beginning and is without end. Therefore I can not otherwise believe, for He hath created so great and so many and so wonderful visible creatures; and He ruleth them all and directeth them all, and at one time adorneth them with the most winsome appearances, while at another time He taketh away their adornments and beauties. He ruleth the kings who have the most power on this earth—who like all men are born, and also perish like other men. Then He letteth them rule while He willeth. For such and for many such things I do not know how I can doubt His eternity; and also about the life of our souls I do not now doubt any more. But I doubt yet about the eternity of souls, whether they are immortal.

R. [59.28—60.29] About what dost thou doubt? Are not all the holy books well nigh full of the immortality of the soul? But methinks that too long to enumerate now in full, and

*too long for thee to hear.*

*A. I have heard a good deal of it, and I also believe it; but I desire rather to know it than to believe it.*

*R. I wonder why thou yearnest to know so very much and so certainly what no man in the prison of this present life ever so certainly could know as thou wishest, although many yearn to understand it more clearly in this present life than many others believe it from the sayings of these and truthful men. No one can ever understand all that he would, till the soul be parted from the body; nor indeed before Doomsday so clearly as he would. And yet the holy Fathers that were before us knew very truly about that which thou before didst ask, to wit, about the immortality of men's souls, which was so clear to them that they had no doubt, since they despised this present life [11] ... they would be parted; and just as they endured the greatest torments in this world, so they would afterward have the greater reward in the eternal life. Through the sayings of such men we should infer that we can not understand it as clearly as they could; howbeit as regards the immortality of the soul, if thou dost not yet assent to it, I will make thee to understand it, and I will also cause thee to be ashamed that thou understoodest it so slowly.*

*A. Even so do! Cause me to be ashamed therefor.*

*R. Behold, I know that thou hast to-day the lord whom thou trustest in all things better than thyself; and so also hath many a servant who hath a less powerful lord than thou hast; and I know that thou hast also many friends whom thou trustest well enough, though thou dost not trust them altogether so well as thou dost thy lord. How seemeth it to thee now, if thy lord should tell thee some news which thou never before heardest, or if he should say to thee that he saw something which thou never sawest? Doth it seem [60.29—61.29] to thee that thou wouldst doubt his statement at all, because thou didst not see it thyself?*

*A. Nay, nay, verily; there is no story so incredible that I would not believe it, if he should tell it. Yea, I even have many companions, whom, if they should say that they themselves saw or heard it, I would believe just as well as if I myself saw or heard it.*

*R. I hear now that thou believest thy lord better than thyself, and thy companions quite as well as thyself. Thou dost very rightly and very reasonably, in that thou hast such good faith in them. But I would that thou shouldst tell me whether Honorius, the son of Theodosius, seem to thee wiser or more truthful than Christ, the Son of God.*

*A. Nay, verily nay; nowhere near! But methinks that it is difficult for thee to compare them together. Honorius is very good, although his father was better; the latter was very devout and very prudent and very rightly of my lord's kin; and so is he who still liveth there. I will honor them just as a man should a worldly lord, and the others of whom thou didst formerly speak just as their masters, and as one should the king who is the King of all kings, and the Creator and Ruler of all creatures.*

*R. Now I hear that the Almighty God pleaseth thee better than Theodosius; and Christ, the Son of God, better than Honorius, the son of Theodosius. I blame thee not that thou lovest both, but I advise thee to love the higher lords more, for they know all that they wish and can perform all that they wish.*

*A. All that thou sayest is true. I believe it all.*

*R. Now I hear that thou trustest the higher lord better. But I would know whether it seem to thee that thy worldly lords have wiser and truer servants than the higher lords have. Trustest thou now thyself and thy companions better than thou dost the Apostles, who were the servants of Christ Himself? Or the Patriarchs? Or the Prophets, through whom*

*God Himself spake to His people what He would?*

*A. Nay, nay; I trust not ourselves so well, nor anywhere near, as I do them.*

*R. [61.30—62.30] What spake God then more often, or what said He more truly through His Prophets to His people than about the immortality of souls? Or what spake the Apostles and all the holy Fathers more truly if not about the eternity of souls and about their immortality? Or what meant Christ, when He said in His Gospel: 'The unrighteous shall go into eternal torments, and the righteous into eternal life'? Now thou hearest what said Christ and His Apostles; and I heard before that thou didst doubt nothing of the word of Honorius and his servants. Why doubtest thou, then, about the words of Christ, the Son of God, and those of the Apostles, which they themselves uttered? They spake to us more of such like words than we can count, and with many examples and proofs they explained it to us. Why canst thou, then, not believe them all, and why saidst thou before that thou wert their man?*

*A. So I say still, and say that I believe them, and also know exactly that it is all true that God either through Himself or through them said; for there are more of these occurrences in the holy books than I can ever count. Therefore I am now ashamed that I ever doubted about it, and I confess that I am rightly convinced, and I shall always be much happier when thou dost convince me of such things than I ever was when I convinced another man. All this I knew, however, before; but I forgot it, as I fear also that I shall this. I know also that I had so clean forgotten it that I should never have remembered it again, if thou hadst not cited me clearer examples, both about my lord and about many parables.*

*R. I wonder why thou couldst ever suppose that men's souls were not eternal, for thou clearly enough knewest that they are the highest and the most blessed of the creatures of God; and thou knowest also clearly enough that He alloweth no creature entirely to pass away so that it cometh to naught—not even the most unworthy of all. But He beautifieth and adorneth all creatures, and again taketh away their beauty and adornments, and yet again reneweth them.[62.30—63.34] They all so change, however, that they pass away, and suddenly come again and return to that same beauty and to the same winsomeness for the children of men, in which they were before Adam sinned. Now thou canst perceive that no creature so fully passeth away that it cometh not again, nor so fully perisheth that it doth not become something. Now that the weakest creatures do not pass away entirely, why then supposest thou that the most blessed creature should entirely depart?*

*A. Alas! I am beset with wretched forgetfulness, so that I can not remember it as well as before. Methinks now that thou hadst explained it to me clearly enough by this one example, though thou hadst said nothing more.*

*R. Seek now in thyself the examples and the signs, and thou canst know well what thou before wouldst know, and what I explained to thee by the concrete examples. Ask thine own mind why it is so desirous and so zealous to know what was formerly, before thou wert born, or ever thy grandfather was born; and ask it also why it knoweth what is now present and what it seeth and heareth every day; or why it wisheth to know what shall be hereafter. Then I suppose it will answer thee, if it is discreet, and say that it desireth to know what was before us for the reason that it always existed since the time that God created the first man; and therefore aspireth to what it formerly was, to know what it formerly knew, although it is now so heavily weighed with the burden of the body that it can not know what it formerly knew. And I suppose that it will say to thee that it knoweth what it here seeth and heareth, because it is here in this world; and I suppose also that it will say that it wisheth to know what shall happen after our days, because it knoweth that it shall ever be.*

*A. Methinks now that thou hast clearly enough said that every man's soul ever is, and ever shall be, and ever was since God first made the first man.*

*R. There is no doubt that souls are immortal. Believe thine own reason, and believe Christ, the Son of God, and believe[63.34—64.35] all His sayings, because they are very reliable witnesses; and believe thine own soul, which always saith to thee through its reason that it is in thee; it saith also that it is eternal, because it wisheth eternal things. It is not so foolish a creature as to seek that which it can not find, nor wish for that which doth not belong to it. Give over now thy foolish doubting. Clear enough it is that thou art eternal and shalt ever exist.*

*A. That I hear and that I believe and clearly know, and I am rejoiced as I never was at anything. Now I hear that my soul is eternal and ever liveth, and that the mind shall ever hold all that my mind and my reason gathered of good virtues. And I hear also that my intellect is eternal. But I wish yet to know what I before asked about the intellect: whether it shall, after the parting of the body and the soul, wax or wane, or shall stand still in one place, or do as it before did in this world—for a time wax, then for a time wane. I know now that life and reason are eternal, albeit I fear that it shall be in that world as it is here in children. I do not suppose that the life there shall be without reason, any more than it is here in children; in that case there would be too little winsomeness in that life.*

*R. I hear now what thou wouldst know, but I can not tell thee in a few words. If thou wilt know it clearly, then shalt thou seek it in the book which we call De Videndo Deo. In English the book is called Of Seeing God. But be now of good cheer, and think over what thou hast now learned, and let us both pray that He may help us, for He promised that He would aid every one who called on Him and rightly wished it; and He promised without any doubt that He would teach us after this world that we might very certainly know perfect wisdom and full truthfulness, which thou mayest hear about more clearly in the book which I have before named to thee—De Videndo Deo.*

*Here endeth the anthology of the second book which we call Soliloquies.*

### **BOOK III**

*Then said I: Now thou hast ended the sayings which thou hast selected from these two books, yet hast not answered me about what I last asked thee, to wit, about my intellect. I asked thee whether, after the parting of body and soul, it would wax or wane, or whether it would do both as it before did.*

*R. Did I not say to thee before that thou must seek it in the book which we then spake of? Learn that book, then thou wilt find it there.*

*A. I do not care now to study all that book; but I would that thou tell me that [12] ... the glory of the good, that their own torment may seem the more to them, because they would not by their Father's advice merit the same honors while they were in this world. And the good see also the torments of the wicked in order that their own glory may seem the more. The wicked see God as the guilty man who is condemned before some king; when he seeth him and his own dear ones, then seemeth to him his punishment the greater. And so also the dear ones of the king see their punishment, so that their honors always may seem to them the greater. No man ought to suppose that all those that are in hell have like torments, nor that all those that are in heaven have like glory; but every one hath according to his merits, punishment as well as glory, whichever he is in. The like have their*

*like. Moreover, it is not to be supposed that all men have like wisdom in Heaven; for every one hath it in the measure which he here merited. As he toileth better here and better yearneth after wisdom and righteousness, so hath he more of it there; likewise more honor and more glory. Hath it now been clearly enough explained about wisdom and about the vision of God?*

*A. Yea; truly enough I believe that we need not lose aught[66.5—67.9] of the wisdom which we now have, although the soul and the body part. But I believe that our intellect shall thereby be very much increased, though we can not all know before Doomsday what we would know. Howbeit I believe that after Doomsday naught will be hidden from us, neither of that which is in our days, nor of that which was before us, nor of that which shall come after us. Thou hast now related to me many examples, and I myself have seen in the writings of the sacred books more than I can reckon, or even can remember. Thou didst show me also such reliable testimony that I can do nothing else but believe it; for if I believe not weaker testimony, then know I very little or naught. What know I except that I wish we knew about God as clearly as we would? But the soul is weighed down and busied with the body so that we can not, with the eyes of the mind, see any thing just as it is, any more than thou canst see at times the sun shine, when the clouds shoot between it and thee, although it shineth very brightly where it is. And even though there be no cloud between thee and it, thou canst not see it clearly just as it is, because thou art not where it is; nor can thy body be there; nor can thy bodily eyes come any nearer there, nor even see that far. Not even the moon, which is nearer us, can we see just as it is. We know that it is larger than the earth, and yet it doth not seem at times larger than a shield on account of the distance. Now thou hast heard that we can not with the eyes of the mind ever see any thing of this world just as it is; yet from the part of it which we see we must believe the part which we do not see. But it is promised us beyond any doubt that, as soon as we come out of this world and the soul is released from the prison of the body, we shall know every thing which we now desire to know, and much more than the ancients, the wisest of all on the earth, could know. And after Doomsday it is promised that we may see God openly—yea, see Him just as He is; and know Him ever afterwards as perfectly as He now knoweth us. There shall never be any wisdom want to[67.9—68.10]ing us. He who granteth us to know Himself will conceal naught from us. Howbeit we shall know then all that we now wish to know, and also that which we do not now wish to know. We shall all see God, both those who here are worst, and those who here are best. All the good shall see Him, to their comfort, and joy, and honor, and happiness, and glory; and the wicked shall see Him just the same as the good, though to their torment, for they shall see [13] ... might or could in this world, or whether they had any remembrance of the friends whom they left behind in this world.*

*Then answered he his own thoughts and said: Why supposest thou that the departed good who have full and complete freedom shall know what they wish to know, either in this present life or in that to come? Why supposest thou that they have no memory of their friends in this world, inasmuch as the wicked Dives feared the same torments for his friends in hell as he had merited? It was he whom Christ spake of in His Gospel that besought Abraham to send Lazarus the beggar to him that he, with his little finger, might place a drop of water on his tongue and therewith cool his thirst. Then said Abraham: 'Nay, my son; but consider that thou didst withhold from him all comforts when ye were both in the body, thou having every good, and he every misfortune. He can not now do more for thy comfort than thou wouldst then do for him.' Then said the rich man: 'Abraham, if that can*



*not be, send him to my five brethren who are still on the earth where I was, that he may tell them in what punishment I am, and may admonish them to take warning not to come hither.' Then said Abraham: 'Nay, nay; they have the books of the holy Fathers with them on earth. Let them study them and believe them. If they do not believe them, neither will they believe Lazarus, though he come to them.'*

*Now [68.11—69.14] we can hear that both the departed good and the wicked know all that happeneth in this world, and also in the world in which they are. They know the greatest part—though they do not know it all before Doomsday—and they have very clear remembrance of their kin and friends in the world. And the good help the good, every one of them another, as much as they can. But the good will not have mercy on their wicked friends, because the latter do not wish to depart from their evil, any more than Abraham would not pity the rich man who was his own kin because he perceived that he was not so humble to God as he ought rightly to be. The wicked, then, can neither do their friends nor themselves any good, because they were formerly, when they were in this world, of no aid either to themselves or to their friends who had passed away before them. But it shall be with them even as it is with men, who are in this world brought into the prison of some king and can see their friends all day and ask about them what they desire, albeit they can not be of any good to them, nor the prisoners to them; they have neither the wish nor the ability. Wherefore the wicked have the greater punishment in the world to come, because they know the glory and the honor of the good; and all the more because they recall all the honor which they had in this world; and moreover they know the honor which those have who shall then be left behind them in this world.*

*Howbeit the good, then, who have full freedom, see both their friends and their enemies, just as in this life lords and rulers often see together both their friends and their enemies. They see them alike and know them alike, albeit they do not love them alike. And again the righteous, after they are out of this world, shall recall very often both the good and the evil which they had in this world, and rejoice very much that they did not depart from their Lord's will, either in easy or in hidden things, while they were in this world. Just so some king in this world may have driven one of his favorites from him, or he may have been forced from [69.14—70.5] the king against both of their wills; then hath he many torments and many mishaps in his exile, yet he may come to the same lord whom he before was with, and there be much more worshipful than he was. Then he will recall the misfortunes which he had there in his exile, and yet not be the more unhappy. But I myself saw or [believed] what more untrustworthy men told me than those were who told what we are seeking. Must I not needs do one of two things—either believe some men or none? Methinks now that I know who built the city of Rome, and also many another thing which existed before our day, all of which I can not sum up. I know not who built the city of Rome for the reason that I myself saw it. Nor even know I of what kin I am, nor who my father or mother was, except by hearsay. I know that my father begat me and my mother bare me, but I do not know it because I myself saw it, but because it was told me. Howbeit not so trustworthy men told that to me as those were who said that which we now for a long time have sought for; and still I believe it.*

*Therefore methinks that man very foolish and very wretched who will not increase his intelligence while he is in this world, and also wish and desire that he may come to the eternal life, where nothing is hid from us.*

*Here end the sayings which King Alfred collected from the book which we call in....*

#### FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Passages in italics were added by Alfred to the original Latin.
- [2] An omission in the MS.
- [3] Supplied by translator to complete the sense.
- [4] Supplied from the Latin.
- [5] Doubtful rendering of and *swā-swā mē ēr pūhton*.
- [6] Ps. 119. 96, inexactly quoted.
- [7] Translating MS., *ho feut*, emended to *hlāford* at the suggestion of Professor Cook. Cf. translator's ed. of the OE. version, 29. 20.
- [8] 1 Cor. 3. 9.
- [9] Supplied by translator.
- [10] Supplied by translator.
- [11] A break in the MS.
- [12] A break in the MS.
- [13] Omission in the MS.